

SITUATION REPORT NO. 4
INCIDENT NO. 98-002 (Continuation of 97-015)
DATE: February 27, 1998 TIME: 2:00 p.m.

TO: Governor Edward T. Schafer
State Capitol
Bismarck, ND 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: 1997 spring flood statewide.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: No change from previous reports.
3. DAMAGES: The spring flood potential for the Red River Valley has been upgraded by the National Weather Service (NWS). The NWS issued an updated Spring Snowmelt Flood Outlook narrative report on February 27. This revised forecast calls for minor to moderate flooding in the Red River Valley. Earlier reports had called for minor flooding. However, hydrologists upgraded the spring flood potential because of above normal temperatures and significant precipitation that had occurred over the basin since the last report. Snow depths measure up to eight inches and contain up to three inches of water equivalent. Minor snowmelt flooding is defined by the NWS as a general term indicating "minimal or no property damage, but possibly some public inconvenience." Moderate flooding indicates that evacuation may be required, inundation of secondary roads may occur, and property may have to be relocated to a higher elevation. The above normal temperature trend that the Red River Valley has been experiencing has come to an end this weekend. Forecasted colder temperatures for the first week of March will slow the current melt. The magnitude and timing of runoff and flooding are dependent on future weather patterns.

Recent rain and snowfall and unseasonably mild temperatures have caused gradual increases in river levels throughout the Red River Basin. These factors have pushed river levels near or above flood stage. The Red River has risen to 20.12 feet at Fargo; flood stage is 17 feet. Upstream, the river was nearing its 10-foot stage at Wahpeton. The level on February 27 was 9.1 feet. The Wild Rice River at Abercrombie is above its 10-foot flood stage. The river level was recorded at 13.49 feet. Meanwhile, the Sheyenne River at Cooperstown has risen to 11.73 feet; flood stage is 12 feet. These levels are not expected to cause major threats to property and people.

The revised Spring Snowmelt Flood Outlook narrative report calls for Devils Lake to rise to 1,444 to 1,444.5 feet, a one-half-foot increase over the February 13 forecast. Precipitation over the Devils Lake Basin in February is expected to average one-half to 1.5 inches above normal. The level of Devils Lake at Creel Bay had reached 1,442.86 feet on February 27. A one-foot rise in Devils Lake waters this year could cause up to \$20 million to \$30 million in damages to property and roads, the State Engineer has reported. A one-foot rise should enlarge the lake to around 105,000 acres, an increase of 5,000 acres from last summer. Approximately five shoreline homes would be lost if the lake rises one foot, according to the Ramsey County Emergency Manager. If spring weather is warmer and drier than normal, the lake could crest in May or June instead of mid-summer.

Although snow depths from this week's blizzard range from 12 to 18 inches in western and north central North Dakota, meteorologists do not expect flooding to occur this spring in the Missouri, James and Souris River Basins based on current conditions. By the time the blizzard had occurred, soil moisture was below normal in the west to near normal in the east. All rivers had normal to below normal flows. However, above average levels at the Garrison Reservoir have kept the Missouri River flow well above average. The Missouri River at Williston has been near its 20-foot flood stage this past week. The level on February 27 was 19.55 feet.

4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: No change from previous reports.

STATE: No change from previous reports.

FEDERAL: No change from previous reports.

5. VOLUNTEER ACTION: No change from previous reports.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has awarded more than \$2.2 million in Public Assistance funds for construction upgrades that will protect the Grand Forks water treatment plant. The project calls for protecting the plant from a flood that exceeds last spring's record level flooding. The project will include flood-proofing work, elevation of monitoring devices and upgrades to basement equipment. Completion of the project should enable the facility to operate independently for up to two weeks during a major flooding event. The plant sustained more than \$4.5 million in damages during last spring's flood. Because of these damages, Grand Forks went 13 days without running water and 23 days without drinkable water.

State and federal disaster recovery officials announced on February 19 that FEMA has approved \$524,039 for Minnewaukan's new sewage lagoon. This funding will partially reimburse eligible costs that Minnewaukan has incurred since 1995 to replace its sewage lagoon, which has been inundated by Devils Lake flood waters. The Public Assistance grant was awarded as a result of policy guidance that accelerates restoration of long-term inundated disaster-damaged facilities.

The Grand Forks and East Grand Forks City Councils have selected a levees-only protection system to protect their cities against future flooding. The levee system, one of two options presented by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE), is estimated to cost approximately \$300.6 million. The other option was a levee-diversion combination with a preliminary price tag of \$932.2 million. That option proved too cost prohibitive. Another option for the cities would be to take no action, which would result in a lack of protection for the communities. The selection of the levees-only system means the COE will work with state and local officials to develop project details for subsequent federal review.

Applicants who registered for the Individual and Family Grant Program (IFGP) have until April 3 to turn in receipts for disaster-related expenses for preventive measures, moving and storage, medical and transportation costs. The program, administered by North Dakota Emergency Management, has approved more than \$14.1 million in grants to individuals for flood losses. The average IFGP grant is \$1,339.24. The staff has closed 23,243 cases. Of the more than 23,000 IFGP applications processed for grant awards, only 15 have been appealed by the applicants. Of those appeals, 11 were denied, one was paid in full and three are pending.

As of February 25, FEMA and State Emergency Management Public Assistance staffs had received 4,295 Damage Survey Reports (DSRs) and have obligated funds for 3,938 DSRs. Survey work has been completed for 425 of the 440 applicants for the 1997 flood. More than \$114.8 million in infrastructure repairs, emergency work and debris removal has been determined to be eligible statewide. All state inspectors have been released from duty. The North Dakota Emergency Management Public Assistance staff will address additional re-inspection work.

The Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (HMGP) has \$37 million available for projects designed to reduce or eliminate the risk of future flooding statewide. To date, nearly \$31 million has been approved, or is pending FEMA approval, for acquisition of properties in floodplains and infrastructure projects to include sluice gates, flap gates and lift stations.

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has approved a total of nearly \$181.7 million in low-interest loans for businesses and individuals. To date, the SBA has received 11,705 loan applications, 6,692 of which have been approved. Of the total amount of money loaned, 54 percent were to home owners and renters for real estate and personal property losses, and 46 percent were to business owners for repairs to businesses and for lost income.

To date, 24,488 awards have been approved for more than \$54 million in Disaster Housing assistance provided by FEMA.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: No change from previous reports.
8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: No change from previous reports.
9. OTHER: A separate Situation Report is being prepared for Incident Number 98-015, the current winter storm.

The State Flood Coordination Center (SFCC) meeting scheduled for Devils Lake on February 26 was cancelled due to the weather. The next SFCC meeting in Devils Lake will be conducted on March 19, 1998.

Other web site addresses for flood recovery information include:

N.D. Division of Emergency Management: <http://www.state.nd.us/dem>
City of Grand Forks: <http://www.grandforks.com>
N.D. League of Cities: <http://www.ndlc.org>
N.D. State Water Commission: <http://water.swc.state.nd.us>
N.D. Attorney General Office: <http://www.state.nd.us/ndag>
N.D. Department of Agriculture: <http://www.state.nd.us/agr/>
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: <http://www.ncs-wc.usace.army.mil>
U.S. Geological Survey: <http://srv1dndbmk.cr.usgs.gov/public/index.html>

Douglas C. Friez, State Director